

Whitely: A True Community

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor
Eva Zygmunt-Fillwalk

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eva M. Zygmunt-Fillwalk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Abstract

This Honors Thesis project was completed as a collaborative effort from three Honors College students who had participated previously in an immersive learning experience through the Teacher's College. This thesis illustrates Whitely, an exemplary community in Muncie that, despite several biases and stereotypes, has overcome many obstacles and hardships. Drawing upon the knowledge and perception the three students had gained from working in the Whitely community, they created a video. Through this video, the goal was to capture the opinions and experiences of Ball State students and members of the Whitely community. The history of the Whitely community is also explored as well as the reasons that biases and stereotypes may have developed, and the video explains how the Whitely community plans to eradicate them.

Acknowledgements

The three Honors students would like to thank the Whitely Community members for welcoming us into the community and providing us with an increased understanding of how a community works together in order to overcome prejudices. There were several members from the Whitely Community that took their time to answer our questions and share resources with us to create this project. The creators of this Honors Thesis would like to extend a special “thank you” to Wilisha Scaife, Michael Long, Mary Dollison, Cornelius Dollison and the Buley kids for agreeing to interview with us and sharing their community with us. Thank you also to the Ball State students who interviewed with us: Emilie Carrison and Emily Young. Finally, a special “thank you” goes to our advisor through this project, Eva Zygmunt-Fillwalk. We appreciate her willingness to provide guidance, encouragement, and support for this thesis project.

Author's Statement

Author's Statement: Kelcey Magnuson

I decided I wanted to create my Honors Thesis project about the Whitely Community because it is where the majority of my learning occurred at Ball State. I was only placed in Whitely for one semester, but while I was in Whitely I learned more than I could have hoped to learn in my other six semesters on Ball State's campus. Throughout the duration of this Honors project I have learned a lot about my future, my community, and myself. Interacting outside of the Ball State community has opened my mind to many things. I was first introduced to Whitely through an immersive project called Schools Within the Context of Community in the fall of 2012. It was through this immersive learning project that I became inspired, along with the other two authors, Allison and Erin, to complete my honors thesis about the Whitely Community.

The Whitely Community fascinated me for many reasons. I was able to interact with the community in several ways. I attended meetings, I volunteered at events, and I worked at the elementary school. During all of these events it became clear what the community meant to the people who lived within it. I saw adults who were trying to create a better environment for their children and I saw children who cherished their community. Every single generation within the community worked together to make Whitely a better, safer, more caring place to live.

I have never seen so many passionate people in my life. The Whitely Community members welcomed all of the Schools Within the Context of Community members with open arms. They were eager to show off their community and get us involved in the changes. The community was proud and dedicated. The community members genuinely

cared about the well-being of each individual, and were willing to do whatever it took to help. They had fundraisers, neighborhood cleanups, and meetings to discuss the betterment of the community.

The Whitely Community is a place where negative stereotypes have been directed for years. There are many ideas and beliefs that people hold about the Whitely Community based solely on their own prejudices. Whitely is a poorer area than many places around it. The community is also largely African American, and I believe that both of these factors influence the stereotypes towards Whitely. I have heard Whitely described as “sketch,” and “dangerous.” However, through my time in Whitely I have experienced the exact opposite. It is because of these conflicting opinions that I decided to complete my Honors Thesis about this community.

The community members of Whitely are some of the most welcoming, passionate, and loving people I have ever met. The stereotypes that have been placed on Whitely have only made the Whitely Community grow closer together. The community members have been working to become safer and more beautiful for many years. They hope that by completing these projects more people will come into Whitely to see the community for what it really is, and stop the unfair prejudices.

Before Whitely, I never thought much about my own community. I believed that a community was based on your geographic location and not much else. Since being involved in Whitely, I can proudly say that my own beliefs have changed. I believe that community is still related to geographic location, but it also should be a place where people are passionate about achieving the same goals.

One of the best things I have learned through this experience is not to believe everything you hear. Immersing yourself into a place and introducing yourself to a new person are the only ways to get an accurate understanding of them. After doing those, you are free to make your own decisions.

My two co-authors and I decided on the overall theme of our project quickly. We wanted to introduce the real Whitely to others and share what we had discovered through our time in Whitely. We decided on a medium for the project without delay. I believed that using a video would be the best way to get the information to the highest number of people. Using a video was aesthetically interesting, and the video could be placed in many locations for people to see. Using a video for our project was also the best way to have the community voices heard, and allow people to put faces to the Whitely Community.

During this project I was mainly in charge of creating the movie. We conducted interviews with members of the community to expose Whitely for its true self. I then took the videos and images that we gathered to produce an approximately ten minute movie. We had a general plan for how the video was to be organized, as well as what we wanted the video to convey. I cut and organized the pictures and interviews into a video that expressed our discoveries and ideas. The overarching purpose of our video was to inform people about the Whitely Community, as well as to encourage people not to “judge a book by its cover.”

A primary reason that I wanted to work on this project was to show other educators how important it is to know where you are teaching. This community has taught me a lot about my future. I am going to become a teacher, and it is important that I

do not make assumptions about my students. Without getting to know the community around the school you could make assumptions about a student. For example, if you hear a student comes from a “bad” part of town, you could assume that the student is also bad. However, if you actually know the community that is supposedly “bad,” you could form your own opinions, and then you would be able to recognize what values and beliefs your student and their parents may hold. Getting to know each child individually is truly the only way to ensure equal treatment of all students. I wanted this idea to be conveyed throughout the project, and I believe it was. It is important not to judge someone from where they come from, especially if you have no direct experience with that location.

Understanding the communities that students are coming from can help a teacher form lessons, management plans, and learning experiences that are formatted for the specific students. For example, if a community is fond of dancing, incorporating dance into lessons can be a great way to show that you know students, and make school more exciting. I also think this video project can show students at Ball State how important our backgrounds are. Judging people without knowing where they came from or what they have had to overcome is insensitive and wrong.

I also wanted this video project to show all of the goals that Whitely is working on to better their community. It was important to me that people see how much pride the members take in their community, and what they are doing to try and fix the stereotypes. The stereotypes, although inaccurate, are obviously affecting the members and they are trying hard to correct these stereotypes. I wanted as many people to see the real Whitely as possible, and that is why I decided to work on this project.

My two co-authors and I became passionate about this project in order to eliminate some of the stereotypes held about the small community of Whitely. By showing what a great experience we had in Whitely, we hope people will be more willing to involve themselves in this community as well as others just like Whitely. I want our project to be an inspiration to students and faculty at Ball State, as well as educators and future educators to rise above stereotypes and get to know each individual separately.



Institutional Review Board

DATE: August 14, 2013

TO: Eva Zygmunt-Fillwalk, Ph.D.

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 134221-6

TITLE: Schools Within the Context of Community

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: APPROVED

DECISION DATE: August 14, 2013

EXPIRATION DATE: August 13, 2014

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

The Institutional Review Board has approved your Continuing Review/Progress Report for the above protocol, effective August 14, 2013 through August 13, 2014. All research under this protocol must be conducted in accordance with the approved submission.

Editorial Notes:

1. CR approved.

As a reminder, it is the responsibility of the P.I. and/or faculty sponsor to inform the IRB in a timely manner:

- when the project is completed,
- if the project is to be continued beyond the approved end date,
- if the project is to be modified,
- if the project encounters problems, or
- if the project is discontinued.

Any of the above notifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>). Please reference the IRB protocol number given above in any communication to the IRB regarding this project. Be sure to allow sufficient time for review and approval of requests for modification or continuation. If you have questions, please contact Sarah Ryle at (765) 285-5052 or sgryle@bsu.edu.

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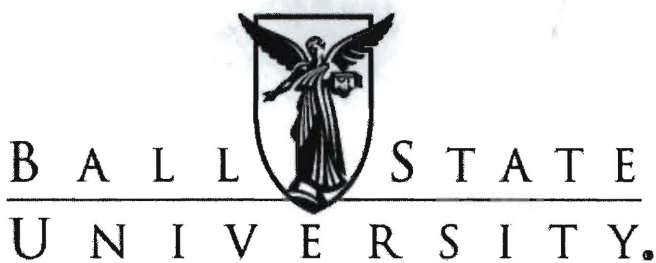
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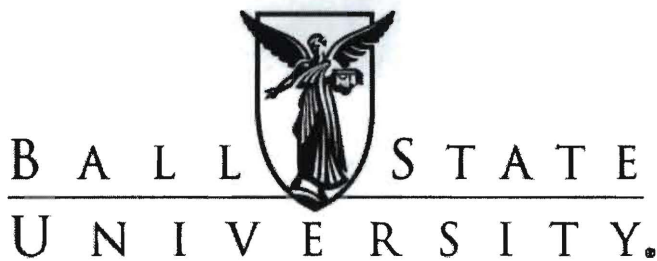
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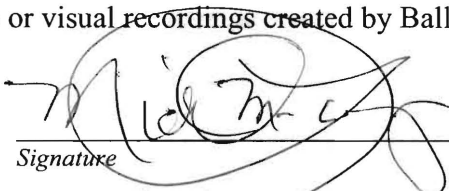
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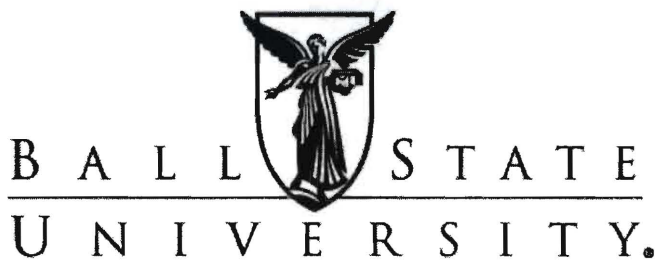
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